U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Wildlife Habitat and Our Shared Conservation Stewardship

Distribution of Elk, Mule Deer, Bighorn Sheep, and Wild Turkey in the Western United States

March 2026

The Bureau of Land Management's Mission and Role in Wildlife Conservation

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) multiple-use and sustained yield mission, "To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations," was set forth in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. This act of Congress directs the BLM to manage public lands for a variety of uses, such as energy development, livestock grazing, recreation, mining, and timber harvesting, while protecting and sustaining a wide array of natural, cultural, and historical resources. Fish and wildlife development and utilization is one of the six principal or major uses of the public lands.

With approximately 245 million acres of public land primarily located in 12 western states, the BLM manages more wildlife habitat than any other federal agency. BLM-managed lands comprise some of the Nation's most ecologically diverse and essential habitat—home to thousands of wildlife species, including big game, upland game, and waterfowl, as well as nongame mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, and invertebrate species. Wildlife-related activities on BLM-managed lands, such as hunting, birding, and wildlife viewing, contribute hundreds of millions of dollars in economic benefits to local communities.

The BLM's wildlife program is responsible for managing habitat to help ensure a natural abundance and diversity of wildlife on public lands. This work is accomplished through a variety of habitat conservation and restoration activities, often funded through partnerships with state and other federal agencies and nongovernmental organizations. These activities provide countless benefits to the public by protecting, restoring, and enhancing wildlife habitat to support healthy biological communities. As a result, this work helps maintain and increase wildlife-related recreational opportunities on our public lands.

Working Together for Wildlife Habitat Improvement

The BLM continues to focus on habitat conditions and resource management strategies across landscapes. The BLM works closely with state fish and wildlife agencies, which have primary responsibility for wildlife management, to identify conservation priorities for wildlife habitat and to effectively monitor progress toward achieving objectives. Emphasis is placed on implementing conservation actions intended to sustain wildlife populations by reducing the negative effects of habitat stressors, such as invasive species, catastrophic wildfire, drought, disease, and habitat loss or fragmentation. Much of this work is accomplished through partnerships with states, tribal organizations, conservation groups, and BLM permittees.

About This Brochure

To meet our multiple-use and sustained yield mission, it is important for the BLM to use the best available information on resource values. Often, this information comes from our partners in the form of mapped data. This brochure shows, at a very broad scale, the current distribution of four important North American game species on BLM-administered public lands: elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, and wild turkey. The BLM thanks hunters and wildlife viewers for responsibly enjoying America's public lands.

The BLM gratefully acknowledges the following organizations for their generous contributions and support in the production of this brochure:

RMEF www.rmef.org

Wild Sheep Foundation www.wildsheepfoundation.org

WAFWA Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies www.wafwa.org

nwtf National Wild Turkey Federation www.nwtf.org

Mule Deer Foundation www.muledeer.org

BLM/HQ/GI-26/002+6515

Elk Habitat

and BLM-Managed Lands Across the Western United States

Of the 302 million acres of elk habitat in the Western United States, approximately 52 million acres (17%) are managed by the BLM.

Legend

- 100th Meridian
- Elk Habitat
- Elk Habitat on BLM-Managed Lands
- BLM-Managed Lands

Elk habitat data: Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, 2016. CA, CO, UT, ND, NV, and WY state wildlife agencies, 2017–2025.

Data from national parks and federal Indian reservation lands may not be included in this representation.

This map depicts BLM-managed lands and habitat west of the 100th meridian. No warranty is made as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data.

Bureau of Land Management, National Operations Center, Wildlife Habitat Spatial Analysis Lab, 2026.

Mule Deer Habitat

and BLM-Managed Lands Across the Western United States

Legend

- 100th Meridian
- Mule Deer Habitat
- Mule Deer Habitat on BLM-Managed Lands
- BLM-Managed Lands

Of the 717 million acres of mule deer habitat in the Western United States, approximately 119 million acres (17%) are managed by the BLM.

Mule deer habitat data: Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 2021. CA, CO, MT, NV, UT, and WY state wildlife agencies, 2016–2025.

Data from national parks and federal Indian reservation lands may not be included in this representation.

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Bureau of Land Management, National Operations Center, Wildlife Habitat Spatial Analysis Lab, 2026.

Bighorn Sheep-Occupied Habitat

and BLM-Managed Lands Across the Western United States

N

Of the 70 million acres of bighorn sheep-occupied habitat in the Western United States, approximately 23 million acres (33%) are managed by the BLM.*

*These lands support approximately 47% of the current population of desert bighorn sheep subspecies.

Legend

- 100th Meridian
- Bighorn Sheep-Occupied Habitat
- Bighorn Sheep-Occupied Habitat on BLM-Managed Lands
- BLM-Managed Lands

Bighorn sheep habitat data: Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 2020. National Park Service, 2018. AZ, CO, and WY state wildlife agencies, 2025.

Data from federal Indian reservation lands may not be included in this representation.

This map depicts BLM-managed lands and habitat west of the 100th meridian. No warranty is made as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data.

Bureau of Land Management, National Operations Center, Wildlife Habitat Spatial Analysis Lab, 2026.

Wild Turkey Habitat

and BLM-Managed Lands Across the Western United States

N

Of the 242 million acres of wild turkey habitat in the Western United States, approximately 16 million acres (7%) are managed by the BLM.

Legend

- 100th Meridian
- Wild Turkey Habitat
- Wild Turkey Habitat on BLM-Managed Lands
- BLM-Managed Lands

Wild turkey habitat data: National Wild Turkey Federation, 2014; CA, CO, MT, NV, and UT state wildlife agencies, 2015–2025.

Data from national parks and federal Indian reservation lands may not be included in this representation.

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Bureau of Land Management, National Operations Center, Wildlife Habitat Spatial Analysis Lab, 2026.